ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

THE SALE

The Sale consider themselves superior to the other artisan castes. Nowadays they no longer work on the basis of affiliation to the village agriculturists. According to an old informant, 'In the good old days when the Sale used to spin their thread in addition to weaving cloth, they also entered into a definite arrangement with the agriculturists, as most castes do to-day. They supplied us with a certain length of cloth every year, and in return we gave them some grain at each harvest. But now times have changed. They buy yarn manufactured in the mills, weave fancy cloth and sell it for cash.' The weavers have now practically abandoned the traditional system. Only with certain occupational castes do they arrive at a working arrangement under which, in return for their services, they give them an agreed length of cloth. In the course of our investigations we found that such arrangements existed between weavers on the one hand, and potters, barbers and washermen on the other.

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THE GAONDLA

The villagers in this area are very fond of *sendi*, or fermented palm juice. The Gaondla shops are the centre of attraction in the evenings for men—young and old—as well as for many middle-aged and old women. This caste has the monopoly of tapping the different kinds of palm trees, and also of selling the fermented juice, and has admirably succeeded in maintaining it, notwithstanding the introduction of the system by which government leases trees to the highest bidders irrespective of their caste. In Shamirpet, so far, there has been no challenge to their monopoly; although occasionally the Madigas and other poor people steal juice from the pots tied to the trees by the Gaondlas. The Gaondlas first mark out the trees to be tapped, then actually tap them in the afternoons and evenings, and tie pots at the points where each tree has been tapped to collect the dripping juice. Early next morning they go round to these trees again, climb up, and bring back to the village all the juice collected during the night. This is kept by them in large earthen pots and retailed to customers on demand, expecially in the afternoon and in the evening. One of the Gaondla families in the village has a government contract for other liquors and intoxicants. In addition to the fermented palm juice, that shop also sells several other varieties of liquor obtained from distilleries

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1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

564 275 in Hyderabad. Payment is generally in cash, and only in exceptional cases may a credit account be maintained.

564 326 335 THE PANCH BRAMHA GROUP

In an earlier chapter mention has already been made of the group of artisan castes who designate themselves as Panch Bramha and maintain a certain degree of exclusiveness from the other Hindu castes. Out of these, two groups, namely, the Wadla (carpenter) and the Kammari (blacksmith), enter into relations of permanent affiliation to the agriculturists. Under this system, they have to supply new agricultural implements periodically, and look after their maintenance and repairs. In return for these services they get a share of the crops which they have to collect from the fields when harvesting is in progress. In addition to this, they practise their own occupation independently. All their services to non-agriculturists, as well as their services of a non-agricultural nature, must be paid for. The carpenter makes the wooden marriage-post required for several of the rites of Hindu weddings. For this he is paid a small fee prescribed by tradition. The blacksmith repairs and periodically supplies new iron agricultural implements, but in this case the agriculturist concerned has to supply the iron, charcoal and a labourer to work the bellows. The other three groups, that is the goldsmiths, workers in bell metal and carvers of images, specialize in fields which have little or almost nothing to do with agriculture; and as such they carry on their crafts independently.

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564 296 305 THE SAKALI AND THE MANGALI

The barber and the washerman have no direct contribution to make to the agricultural pursuits of the landowners, but their services are required so often by the agriculturist, especially in their socio-religious ceremonies and rituals connected with birth, marriage and death, that the agriculturists find it more convenient to have families from these castes permanently affiliated to their households. For their normal services all the year round, that is for shaving and hair-cutting, or for washing clothes, they collect their share after each harvest. Other services, especially those connected with socio-religious activities, are generally provided for in the rituals themselves, for at several points in their progress these castes have to be given something, either in cash